Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

2016 SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND'S PAY FOR SUCCESS

PANEL COORDINATOR HANDBOOK

All Panel Coordinators are responsible for reading the 2016 Social Innovation Fund Pay for Success (PFS) Notice of Federal Funding Availability and completing the required orientation sessions. It is important to carefully read the Selection Criteria as laid out in the Notice of Funding Availability. Understanding these criteria is critical to being able to provide guidance to your panel members and to ensure that the Selection Criteria are adequately considered and discussed in the Blended review. To be an effective Panel Coordinator, you must be knowledgeable not only about the PFS review process, but also about the Review Participants' role and activities.

PANEL COORDINATOR ROLE

The Panel Coordinator plays a key role in the successful implementation of the Blended review, particularly with ensuring the timely delivery of quality review products to CNCS. Key aspects of the Panel Coordinator's role in the Blended review process include:

◆ Managing the panel's activities in order to meet the review schedule

◆ Serving as the primary link between panel members and CNCS Staff

◆ During the Panel Consensus Meeting, the Lead Reviewer guides discussion of strengths and weaknesses of an application against the selection criteria. The Panel Coordinator guides further discussion by panel members focusing on points of disagreement in an effort to come to consensus

◆ Facilitating panel discussions and fostering a climate of respect within the panel

◆ Providing your panel with constructive and effective guidance in both the Blended review process and the technical aspects of the review

◆ Ensuring Reviewers address the Selection Criteria in their Panel Consensus Meeting and PCFs adequately

◆ Providing timely and consistent feedback to Reviewers on the quality of their review forms

◆ Ensuring Reviewers receive and incorporate feedback from you on their review forms

◆ Informing the panel and CNCS Staff of the review panel's progress

Carefully read the Panel Coordinator Participation Agreement specifying the expectations of the Panel Coordinator role. If you have any questions, please email PeerReviewers@cns.gov. Emails to this address are received by GARP support staff and every effort is made to respond within one business day.

PREPARING FOR THE 2016 PAY FOR SUCCESS GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

- **Timeline and Milestones**

The Blended Review process (excluding orientation sessions and other preliminary steps) spans 11 days. This is a review with federal staff, so expect federal staff to work only during regular business hours. Panel Coordinators should utilize the *Timeline and Milestones* document to develop their own planning timeline for completing all of the Panel Coordinator Review Responsibilities. This document can be found on the CNCS Reviewer Resource Website and specifies the dates and tasks of the Blended Review and the key milestones.

CNCS Reviewer Resource Website: http://www.nationalservice.gov/PFSReviewerPage2016

- **Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality**

Even though you will not be evaluating the Pay for Success applications, as Panel Coordinator you are still subject to the confidentiality and conflict of interest considerations outlined in the *Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement for Review Participants* (COI Statement) on the Reviewer Resource Website.

As soon as the applications assigned to your panel are available, examine each of your assigned applications for potential conflicts. If you suspect a conflict or have a question, contact CNCS immediately and let the staff determine whether a conflict does indeed exist. If CNCS determines that there is a conflict, CNCS Staff will provide you with appropriate guidance. Complete and submit the COI Statement in advance of the start of the review.

> _Note that this form should be completed whether you have or have not identified potential conflicts—as it represents your understanding of your responsibility regarding COIs, and Confidentiality, and your agreement to adhere to the guidelines in the instance that a COI circumstance arises._

Note: See the "Panel Intro Call Agenda" document for a detailed reference of what to cover on this important call.

- **Panel Introduction Call**

The Panel Coordinator's role in the Panel Introduction Call is to organize and begin leading the panel to prepare for the review. **This call should take place within 24 hours of receiving your panel assignments!** It is important to contact your assigned Reviewers and create the review schedule as early as you can. You will be assigned one panel of three Reviewers, from different federal agencies and CNCS. Once you have the contact information for the Reviewers on your panel, you should reach out to introduce yourself and initiate the planning process for the Panel Introduction Call and subsequent Panel Consensus Meetings. Suggested agenda topics for the Panel Introduction Call:

♦ Allow each Reviewer to give his/her background and level of experience with the review process

♦ Establish optimal means of communication for each Reviewer (e.g., preferred email address, phone number)

♦ Review the expectations and schedule, and work together to set the dates and times of the panel discussions

  ■ Encourage flexibility and a commitment to the review schedule and needs

  ■ Discuss and consider time zones for each person, and general "ideal times" for availability and responsiveness

♦ Ensure that everyone is reading the applications in the same order (any order is fine: alphabetically, as they appear in your panel assignment email, etc.)

♦ Ensure that Lead Reviewer role is assigned for each application. All reviewers read all applications. The Lead Reviewer assigned will capture consensus comments and final ratings for the assigned application during the Panel Consensus Meeting and will create the Panel Consensus Form (PCF) that you will be reviewing

SETTING UP YOUR PANEL FOR SUCCESS

Ensuring that Reviewers complete work on time

Setting up for success:

♦ Create group agreements that include completing the work on time.

  ■ Be sure all Reviewers voice their perspective in creating shared group agreements, expectations and schedule. If there are differing expectations, this is the best time to address the standard and expectations of CNCS, and you as a Panel coordinator.

- Monitor and check in with panel members via email.
    - Send out updates of information and reminders of milestones to which the group agreed: ("…*Remember, by the end of today, everyone should have read their first two applications and completed a draft Individual Review Form for each!...."*)

- As a group, create a realistic schedule for completion that attempts to consider everyone's needs.
    - Remind the Reviewers to keep their Timetable handy, refer to it frequently.

- Remind Reviewers of time commitment and encourage them to set aside or otherwise minimize major distractions (e.g., postpone activities that can be done another time).

- Check in periodically to see if the agreed schedule is still realistic and achievable (and modify if needed).

Interventions:

- Remind group of agreed-upon schedule, emphasizing that the reasoning behind pacing themselves is to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed and ensuring that each application has received the fairest quality review from the panel.

- *Next step:* speak with each Reviewer individually to see how you can help him/her get work done on time. Give heads up to your GARP Liaison.

- *Final action:* remind each Reviewer that you will need to notify your GARP Liaison if the work is not done satisfactorily and submitted by the deadline.

Ensuring that Panel Consensus Forms are quality products

Setting up for success:

- Create group agreements that include preparing thoughtful and thorough PCFs

- Review the Selection Criteria by which each application should be evaluated.

- Acknowledge that "details" may be harder for some work styles than others but again, a certain level of detail is necessary for this review.

Interventions:

- Next step: speak with the Reviewers individually and go through specific areas for improvement for the PCF.

- Request your GARP Liaison or Program Officer Liaison join a panel call to explain or clarify any misunderstandings.

Ensuring Reviewer responsiveness to phone calls and/or emails

Setting up for success:

- Talk with panels to establish a response time norm. (Example: all emails will be responded to within eight hours,.)

- Set precedent of asking Reviewers to "reply to confirm" they have received an email.

- Confirm contact lists in the beginning with agreements that they must be available:
    - Iterate that most communication will be via email and requires response
    - Confirm location of listed phone number (work/home/cell)
    - General hours of group availability (day and evening hours)
    - Communicate single days, or hours that a Reviewer is not available
    - Discuss time zones, and general conflicting obligations (should not be numerous or extensive)

♦ Respond promptly when contacted by Reviewers.

♦ Interventions:

♦ If Reviewer is non-responsive to one means of contact, try an alternative format (e.g., if first contact was through email, try the phone).

♦ Contact GARP Liaison to give a heads up if a Reviewer has been non-responsive to attempts. (Don't wait for several days if a Reviewer is nonresponsive, let your GARP Liaison know right away.)

Ensuring that Reviewers have read the *Notice* and key documents

Setting up for success:

♦ Emphasize the need for familiarity with the *Notice* and related documents to effectively review the proposals.

♦ Revisit the roles and responsibilities and Selection Criteria by which each application should be evaluated.

Interventions:

♦ Speak with Reviewer of concern individually to see if he/she understands the *Notice*, potentially highlighting a comment that was made in contradiction with a *Notice* Requirement.

♦ If you sense difficulties that might benefit from this assistance, offer to review them together, etc.

♦ Final step: Contact GARP Liaison to notify them of the issue.

Creating equal "air" time for all Reviewers in the panel discussion

Setting up for success:

♦ Begin with discussion on the general aspects of the application, moving toward the specific aspects to encourage a structured objective discussion of the facts.

♦ Take note of how each Reviewer reacts to conflict or disagreements.

♦ Work to include the entire panel in the discussion for 100% participation.

♦ At the outset of each discussion remind the panel of the group agreements.

♦ Set the tone during the first discussion, communicating your facilitation style and the expectation for participation—calling on each Reviewer to state his/her opinions to set the precedent.

♦ Acknowledge and state that different work styles may participate differently but that all must have an equal opportunity and equal contribution to the discussion.

Interventions:

♦ Step in when group members are not able to keep each other engaged. Structure and lead discussion so that each Reviewer takes turn to state his/her comments on the application.

♦ Actively draw in any Reviewer who seems withdrawn and find out what they would like to contribute.

♦ Step in when group is not able to maintain balanced participation.

♦ Facilitate the conversation flow as needed (e.g., gently deflect a dominating person's input by allowing others to speak).

Preventing difficult interactions among panel member(s) due to personality conflict

Setting up for success:

- Address the application's strengths or weaknesses more than the Reviewer's opinions.

- Ask Reviewers to provide specific reference from application, to encourage objectivity.

- Keep the discussions moving. If a point of strong disagreement occurs, encourage productive discussion about the Selection Criteria. Then move to another point once the various assessments have been stated.

Interventions:

- Acknowledge the issue and provide guidance; remind panel to focus on what is in the proposal and the relevant points.

- Use humor, if appropriate, to break tension.

- Talk with Reviewer privately and ask if something is bothering them – let him/her express it. Ask what the panel member would like to do about it.

- Remind the panel to do what is best for the sake of the applicant.

> **Note:** Your responsibility is to the panel as a whole. If one panel member's needs are taking away from the panel as a whole, you need to seek help from CNCS Staff.

Preventing Review bias

Setting up for success:

- Reiterate Reviewer roles and responsibilities, and remind each panel member about his/her responsibility to give each application a fair and objective review.

Interventions:

- Remind the group as a whole that there is that fine line between contributing their expertise and crossing into bias, so step back and ask them to see if the point they are making may be coming from a bias. Still value their perspective but let them decide.

- Ask Reviewers to provide evidence or elaboration to substantiate his/her point.

- Refer to the Rubric details, and the Selection Criteria when asking Review to reconsider the point.

- Use humor, when appropriate, to bring about awareness of bias.

Assisting Reviewers who appear to struggle with the technical or other requirements of the review

Setting up for success:

- Check in regularly with your panel members both as a group and individually.

- Monitor their progress in writing their PCFs.

- Ask: "How can I assist you?"

Interventions:

- Set up a time to work individually with that panel member to get his/her review forms finalized and sent to you.

- Contact your GARP Liaison.

- Remember that your responsibility is to the panel as a whole. If one panel member's needs are taking away from the panel as a whole, you need to seek help from CNCS Staff. Do not hesitate to ask CNCS Staff for individualized support for the panel member.

COORDINATING YOUR PANEL

The entire Blended Review will be conducted remotely using a Field Review model. Several aspects of the Field Review model can make the Panel Coordinator's role somewhat challenging:

♦ The overlap of review tasks in a condensed timeframe

♦ The absence of face-to-face interaction for communication and discussions

♦ The necessity to facilitate discussions among three people for a common goal

♦ Coordinating schedules of several people (including the Panel Coordinator) to performing review functions while also carrying on their lives (in different time zones)

♦ Interacting with the Program Officer Liaison

The Program Officer Liaison is your resource for programmatic (PFS specific) inquiries. They will not be reviewing any documents. If you would like to have someone else review a document you can request your GARP Liaison to do so. You can request a meeting with your POL (with you on your panel's behalf) if you are receiving multiple questions from the panelists about particular criteria, or the same application.

Be sure that all of your correspondence with your POL takes place through the email address, jstoff@cns.gov. **You must include your Panel# in the Subject line, and CC: your GARP Liaison.**

Facilitating the Panel Consensus Meeting

As the Panel Coordinator, your role is to help ensure that the panel consensus meetings revolve around the Selection Criteria—utilize the IRF/PCF and the Rubric included in the form as needed to keep panel members focused on the appropriate elements and weights. It is important to constructively communicate your observations and expectations, while encouraging your panel members to do the same. The expectation is a smooth, timely and organized process that results in a fair, objective and quality assessment of applicant's proposal. Reviewers may agree, disagree, clarify individual assessments and misunderstandings, and ask questions while collectively discussing an application. It is important to encourage discussion among panel members to ensure application strengths and weaknesses are viewed considering the same criteria. The diverse level of panel members' expertise and backgrounds will lend itself to valuable panel discussions.

CNCS does not provide specific requirements for the panel discussions, and the following are offered only as suggestions

♦ Utilize online scheduling tools (such as Doodle, Schedule Once, etc. according to your panel's preference) to coordinate schedules for arranging the calls.

♦ Provide an agenda prior to the call and begin the call by reviewing the agenda to ensure everyone has the same expectations.

♦ Begin the discussion of the application by providing a summary of the proposed project.

♦ Identify a specific order for each Reviewer to summarize his/her individual evaluation.

♦ Specify set time limits for each Reviewer and/or each application.

Facilitating panel discussions from a distance, via telephone, has some unique challenges. Some of these challenges include: background noise (or conversely, muted phones, and sparse participation), competing distractions (driving, multi-tasking, or other persons nearby); not being able to observe body language, technology barriers, and possible confusion about scheduled times due to time zone differences. You will need to pay close attention to human dynamics and signals from your panel members to facilitate effectively, and be extra rigorous in ensuring that panel communications are clear and understood by all.

Table 2: Panel Coordinator Challenges and Possible Solutions

Challenge	Possible Solutions
Starting calls on time	• Send email reminders in advance of call. • Panelists should have a call-in number, application(s) being discussed, and relevant notes from the Panel Coordinator available before the call start time.
Panel members speaking over each other	• Reach agreement on how panel members will be recognized to speak. • If a particular Reviewer is especially experiencing this problem, a private conversation may be in order.
Not having a visual that everyone can see (e.g., an evolving list of significant strengths and weaknesses for the application)	• Suggest that everyone is at a computer or has printed documents on hand during discussion. • Repeat/restate a comment made to be sure everyone is discussing the same topic. • Make specific page/paragraph/topic references for each application ("for the Kansas app, at the bottom of page 5 …").
One Reviewer is especially quiet during a call	• Directly engage the Reviewer by asking what he/she thinks about the point being discussed.

Providing Feedback on Panel Consensus Forms

Two primary aspects of the Panel Coordinator's role are to monitor Reviewers' progress and to guide Reviewers to produce high-quality PCFs by the established deadlines. The PCFs document a Panel's consensus assessment of an application and serve as the foundation for the review results (provided to CNCS Staff and later to applicants as feedback).

Your primary focus in reviewing and providing feedback on PCFs is to ensure that the Lead Reviewer captured the panel's consensus comments and ratings. Your role is to ensure quality and review for elements such as

♦ Alignment between comments and ratings

♦ Comments that speak to the selection criteria

♦ Use of proper grammar, spelling, and tense

♦ Absence of inflammatory language

You are not expected to edit the PCFs; however, you are expected to point out suggested edits to the Lead Reviewer via email. –The most important task is to help Reviewers understand the PCF and what is expected in the level of quality.

If a panel member is not completing his/her reviews as scheduled, you should contact that Reviewer to understand what the problems are, and to ensure that he/she can get back on schedule. If this issue recurs, the GARP Liaison should be made aware of the efforts and the possible lack of compliance from that Reviewer. This proactive guidance will prevent major challenges for everyone (especially the panel) as the review advances.

Steps in Providing Feedback:

♦ Lead Reviewers will complete the draft PCFs and email them to their Panel Coordinator.

♦ Read the draft PCF and provide your feedback to the Lead Reviewer via email or phone. Change the "Status of Review" section in the PCF to "Awaiting Reviewer Changes" and include PCF with your emailed feedback.

♦ You may ask Lead Reviewer to send you the PCF back after they have incorporated your feedback. If PCF has incorporated your feedback, you will then change the "Status of Review" section in the

PCF to "Approved" and include PCF with an email letting Lead Reviewer know the PCF is approved.

♦ If you did not have any feedback for the Lead Reviewer to incorporate, change the "Status of Review" section in the PCF to "Approved" and include PCF with an email letting Lead Reviewer know the PCF is approved.

♦ Lead Reviewer then emails GARP Liaison final PCF and cc's Panel Coordinator on the email.

**Thank you for being a Panel Coordinator in the
2016 Pay for Success Blended Review!**